

LET'S RESTART!

Nine tips for communicating in the post-pandemic world

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ITALIAN STATISTICS

1 in 3

people tried a new brand thanks to an appreciation for an innovative or empathetic approach towards the pandemic

69%

lost trust in brand that have put profits over people

69%

30%

30% increased information consumption

10%

10% will dedicate more time to consuming news after the pandemic passes

92%

92% retain that brands must do everything possible to protect employee/partner health and financial security



1 There's no restart without trust Brand role

Companies must drive the restart, and right now is the moment. We better integrate the **Evolve**, **Promote** and **Protect** approach to construct long-term, sustainable trust



2 Oh dear, I've lost my target Audience

Consumers are shifting **attitudes**, **opinions** and **habits**. New social tensions are arising. We rediscover our audience and fine-tune communications strategies so we don't lose our target



3 Excuse me, this is my seat Positioning

Yesterday's leaders could very well be tomorrow's post-pandemic followers. We verify and test our positioning, putting our **purpose** to the test



4 Give us back hope Narrative

From **storytelling** to **storydoing**: we build a cohesive narrative to solve (not sell) and transmit a sense of collective courage and hope... but in a gradual, responsible manner



5 Did you really just say positive? Language

Great tragedies transform language and even the imaginary collective. We check and adapt our **vocabulary**, while paying attention to our **imagery** and **tone** of voice



6 I'm the CEO, Chief Empathy Officer The role of the CEO

CEOs and Boards must communicate internally with maximum empathy and authenticity. We develop a **new ability** to face the **unknown**



7 News: too much to handle! Re-imagine earned media

Data, information, practical advice, local initiatives: we develop a concrete, tailor-made narrative to earn relationships, not only visibility



8 Events at a distance Experiential

Experience at the core. We plan events that integrate new, innovative ways that mix live and digital components in order to not lose the three-dimensional relationship with participants



9 And what if it comes back? The crisis

Crisis is no longer just reactive management, but instead becomes a mindset and integral part of strategy: we plan based on our **trust capital** and are ready for each phase of the restart



THERE'S NO *RESTART* WITHOUT *TRUST*

From the comfort of their own quarantined homes, **consumers are watching with a critical eye** how brands are behaving and reacting to the pandemic, **rewarding and punishing companies accordingly**.

The challenging business climate may constraint businesses to focus on short-term survival. But right now is the moment to better leverage the brand's positioning within the **Evolve, Promote** and **Protect** model to build sustainable trust with all stakeholders.

55%

of Italians (and 62% of people globally) recognize the **critical role brands play** to face and overcome the pandemic.

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: "Brand Trust & the Coronavirus Pandemic"

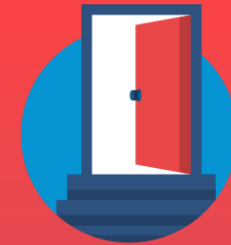


FIGURE 1 FIORELLA PASSONI – CEO, Edelman Italy



*In the post-pandemic era, there will be a need for brands to **be nimble**... Not only with stakeholder relations, but also with business and communication. Brands need to have the courage to question their own strategic approach, and to **revisit their own positioning and purpose** to embark on the «restart» journey in all its different phases.*

*In these trying times during which we need to learn to live with uncertainty, it will be critical to understand how to construct a new corporate narrative that will **help Evolve, Promote and Protect brands and their reputations**.*

*Now more than ever we need to elevate the importance of Trust to construct the foundations, alongside all our partners, for **better societies**.*



OH DEAR, I'VE LOST MY TARGET

Once the Covid-19 crisis is over, ***it cannot be taken for granted that target consumers will be the same as before*** and that brands will be able to engage with them in the same manner.

To manage the «new normal» brands must ***re-discover their audience and update strategies***. They must understand how habits, attitudes and opinions have changed, as well as identify if any new social tensions have emerged.

It is therefore critical to **use data to adapt, respond and target**.

62%

Of Italians (and 60% of people globally) are turning more and more to the brands that they are absolutely sure they can trust.

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: "Brand Trust & the Coronavirus Pandemic"



Jay Gallagher – Planning Executive Director, Edelman EMEA



*What we're seeing over the course of this pandemic is 5 years of talk about 'stakeholder capitalism' and 'brand purpose' reach its critical mass. Afterwards I think we will see that **those that can genuinely show that they are on the side of people will flourish, those that can't, won't.** So communication has to shift from a focus on "Let me tell you about me, and what I make" – classic advertising about product features – to Brands building a more meaningful relationship around what they value in common with their stakeholders. **Brands that show they get the new obligation to be a good citizen and earn the status as a good partner to the other institutions will build the trust and resilience that propels them forward in the new normal.***



POSITIONING

EXCUSE ME, THIS IS MY SEAT

Brands have responded to the crisis in many ways, ranging from fearless leadership through to, on the other side of the spectrum, complete silence.

What is clear is that consumers are already rewarding or punishing brands on how they are behaving in this very moment. Some brands will be able to capitalize on their current efforts, meanwhile some will need to cover lost ground in the near future. Indeed, **today's leaders may become post-pandemic followers.**

Brands must diagnose, guide and measure, putting positioning and purpose to the test... Is it still valid in a post-pandemic world? It may not be the same as it was in January 2020.

66%

Of Italian consumers (65% globally) are clear: the better a brand responds to the crisis, the higher the probability they will purchase from them in the future.

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: "Brand Trust & the Coronavirus Pandemic"



DAVID ARMANO - Global Strategy Director, Edelman



*The temptation to focus on business continuity is more than understandable in a period of uncertainty. However, the world - made up of employees, consumers, customers, media and investors - is watching us and looking for humanity in companies, looking for brands they can trust. And we understand trust: the Edelman Trust Barometer, goes hand-in-hand with purpose. And **purpose is the polar star of an organization, but it is not immune to changes in context, attitudes or society.** We still do not know how society will adapt to the post-pandemic, but purpose should adapt to the new normality and culture.*

Go back to planning, reassessing and realigning your purpose, increasing activations that bring it to life if you truly want to build lasting trust.



NARRATIVE

GIVE US BACK HOPE

Show up and do your part. Companies cannot be bystanders and must offer solutions. Communications must shift from **storytelling** to concrete **storydoing** that offers empathy, humanity and a sense of community, all whilst being in-tune to communities' sensitivities and needs.

Indeed, brands are responsible to create a bridge between the Covid-19 and the different reopening phases. The new storydoing mode needs to responsibly transmit a sense of **collective courage, hope and possibility**.

Brands can do their part by developing campaigns that **leverage newly-found (or rediscovered) values**.

85%

Of Italian consumers (84% globally) ask that brands focus advertising on how their products and services can help people cope with pandemic-related life Challenges.

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: "Brand Trust & the Coronavirus Pandemic"



RAFFAELLA CONCONI - Psychologist & Psychoanalyst



*We will live with a certain level of **anxiety** as long as we face the indefinite danger of a practically unknown virus. Even when we restart, we will find ourselves in a surreal state as we will need to completely rethink and restructure how we go about our daily lives. Some things we will miss, and some will be completely new and different. It won't be easy because, for more than 70 years post-war, we as **Italians have been accustomed to living without uncertainty and without being conditioned by the actions of others.***

*Communicators will need to respond to a need to return to a normal life, to transmit a **sense of possibility and hope**, of a collaboration to restart. Communication will need to always keep in mind the pandemic and its collective experience, since it will be essential to maintain a certain level of **awareness and acceptance**. It would be interesting to leverage newly (re)discovered values or little things that for a long time we've taken for granted.*



DID YOU REALLY JUST SAY *POSITIVE*?

Great tragedies change vocabulary.

As certain words receive increased attention, their meanings are modified. For example, Italians just introduced «patient zero» and «epidemic peak» into everyday language, whilst at the same time the word «positive» is losing its appeal.

As the world restarts, brands must not forget to **consult the new «coronavirus dictionary» to avoid being tone deaf.**

Communicators must double check tone of voice and make any necessary adjustments to present themselves correctly to all key stakeholders (e.g. advertising, branding, press, social, internal, etc.).

57%

Of consumers globally expect or hope that brands will stop advertising or marketing that is too humorous or lighthearted in tone.

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: "Brand Trust & the Coronavirus Pandemic"



ROBERTO GAGNOR - Disney Scenographer, TV and Radio Producer



*In the times of coronavirus **no one wants to be positive, viral or contagious** with their ideas. Nonetheless, it is during situations such as these when we ask ourselves many questions to which there are no answers that we discover to be as strong as Uncle Scrooge's fort: able to withstand everything from lighting to demolition tools. Thus, **we come to grasp what really matters**. In this way tomorrow we put aside aggressive, silly language and adopt a more respectful tone.*

*I believe the most challenging thing will be to **adapt our language – including tone and content – as we move into each new phase of the restart**. There will undoubtedly be a need for small, joyful stories and good news that will transmit hope and serenity.*



«I AM THE CEO, CHIEF EMPATHY OFFICER»

The CEO and company boards must, in this moment of huge uncertainty, **place front and center tenets like empathy, care and gratitude for employees with the utmost sincerity and transparency.** All without being afraid of showing a vulnerable, human side.

An additional, complex task for leaders will be to **develop a new capability to manage uncertainty and** ensure objectives and strategies are redefined in the smartest way possible.

92%

Of Italians (and 90% of people globally) believe that brands must do everything in their power to protect the wellbeing and financial security of their employees and collaborators, even if it brings large financial losses.

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: "Brand Trust & the Coronavirus Pandemic"



JUSTIN BLAKE - Global Head Leadership Positioning, Edelman



*At a time of great uncertainty, more than ever before, people need leadership. And so, in the post-pandemic world, **CEOs need to show their leadership and have the responsibility to navigate the unknown.** They must first address their own employees who have trusted their employer's communications more than those of the government or the media. And neither can consumers who, during the coronavirus crisis, recognize the key role of companies, appreciate their responsiveness and effectiveness. CEOs must therefore **act and speak empathetically**, taking into account the changes that the pandemic is imposing on people and organizations, trying to meet the emotional needs of employees, consumers and stakeholders.*

***Leaders will need to be both Chief Executive Officer and Chief Empathy Officer** in order to navigate their company's in this period of uncertainty.*



NEWS: TOO MUCH TO HANDLE!

During the pandemic, Italians have re-discovered the importance of information and have understood first-hand how it can impact their health, quality of life and even the country's reputation.

Brands must **re-imagine earned media** to co-create, alongside key partners, personalized narratives in a **deeply digital world** that offer consumers useful and practical, relevant information, all with the potential to be localized.

A new way of earning relationships with press, influencers and partners can be developed by working together to communicate storydoing content, ultimately generating an even deeper connection with consumers.

58%

Of Italians have consumed news about the Covid-19 crisis several times a day (vs. 32% global average).

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: "Trust and the Coronavirus",



STEVE RUBEL - Chief Media Ecologist, Edelman



*Based on pure volume, COVID-19 news coverage remains strong and **is the single largest story we may ever see in our lifetimes**. Many media companies have seen large gains in traffic and even paying subscribers. However, there are signs that the story is stabilizing. The news cycle appears to be finding some sort of new baseline. **People are beginning to search for diversions.***

*When planning earned programs, clients should: **consider building “bridge plans” based on data contingencies, watch for pivots in the story** and find ways to **play a relevant role in the media narratives** that will be covered for years to come as we return to a “new normal.”*



EXPERIENTIAL

EVENTS AT A DISTANCE

Major world events across all verticals continue to be cancelled. Nonetheless, **companies are quickly adapting to transform experiences.**

Live events will be slow to restart and once they do, brands must ensure guest safety. As such, **integration of the digital components as a strategic lever to amplify earned creative at the service of Brand Trust** will be more important than ever.

A mix between live event and digital will **ensure the dynamic, three-dimensionality relationship with the spectator.**

81%

Of consumers globally expects brands to do what is right.

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: "Brand Trust & the Coronavirus Pandemic"

86%

Of Italians (and 83% of people globally) expect brands to develop a sense of community and help build emotional bonds.

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: "Brand Trust & the Coronavirus Pandemic"



LAURA CANTARELLI – Director, RCS Live



*Events represent key assets in companies' communication plans. In this new reality, we are in the midst of **transforming events into moments of digital experiences**. But we will quickly move from a transitional period to a more established, **strategic innovation process** which will more than ever put **experiential at the core**.*

*We must develop new experiential capabilities that respond to the needs of in-face meetings and proximity, which we as humans, a society and even companies innately need. And if we do it right, we will do so with a renewed potential, building **complementary virtual and real worlds**.*



AND WHAT IF IT COMES BACK?!

Companies must **rethink the concept of crisis**. They are no longer situations to manage but instead a new strategic input into business strategy that needs to be ready in every phase of the restart. **Prediction is not only possible but essential.**

Brands must monitor their industries and develop potential scenarios that ladder up to a macrostrategy that is nimble to fast changes and updates. Communicators must **plan based on their brand trust capital**, leveraging it not as an insight but instead as a **strategic driver**.

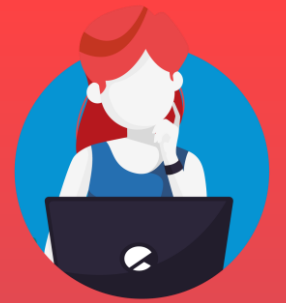
By being **culturally aligned**, planning and taking the time "check in" during each phase of the restart, brands can ensure they are being **concrete and transparent** enough and that they are doing enough to **elevate trust**.

3X

The number of flu vaccines needed later this year when compared with 2019 in order to inoculate fragile populations and ensure Covid-19 infections are not confused with regular influenza.

Meanwhile, there are over 60 vaccines studies currently active, with 3 in clinical trial evaluation.

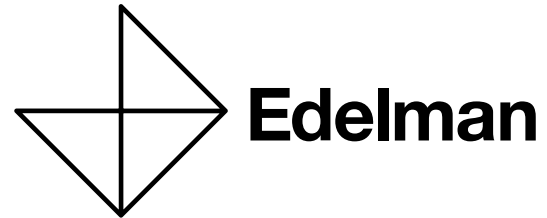
Source: WHO, Landscape of COVID-19 candidate vaccines, April 2020



DUNCAN GALLAGHER - Head of Issues & Crisis EMEA, Edelman



*We are all facing a new normal, organizations during this unprecedented period of history will be judged on how they treated and communicated with all their stakeholders, employees, customers, suppliers, investors and governments. There will have been **opportunities to build trust and potentially damage it**, this means that as we all move into the next phase understanding how to build on that hard-earned trust or rebuild is of prime importance. Many of us will be facing some tough decisions over the coming weeks, that could fundamentally impact our businesses. Planning for these changes through the **understanding of your trust capital will ensure whatever decisions are made, they are informed and support the long-term goals of the organization.***



For further information and insights:

Fiorella Passoni

CEO Edelman Italia

Fiorella.Passoni@edelman.com

Antonello Chieca

Strategic Planner Edelman Italia

Antonello.Chieca@edelman.com

www.edelman.it

